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LETTER DATED 28 AUGUST 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AUSTRIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to draw your attention to the statement issued on 28 August 1998 by the Presidency of the European Union regarding the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ernst SUCHARIPA
Permanent Representative of Austria
to the United Nations

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Annex

[Original: English and French]

Statement on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo issued on 28 August 1998 by the Presidency of the European Union

The European Union remains gravely concerned about the ongoing crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the wider dangers for the region as a whole by the escalation of the conflict. The European Union recalls its statements of 11 and 19 August and reiterates its view that the current conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, involving several neighbouring countries, can only be solved through a negotiated settlement, acceptable to all Congolese, that will allow the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other countries of the region to find the peace and stability that are prerequisites for their development.

The European Union welcomes African initiatives to find a peaceful solution to the conflict and strongly supports the recent mediation efforts undertaken by Nelson Mandela in his capacity as Chairman of the Southern African Development Community and - in a larger context - in the framework of the Organization of African Unity, and calls on all parties to participate.

In this context, the European Union joins the call of the Southern African Development Community summit of 23 August for an immediate ceasefire. This would be a precondition for a political process leading to negotiations aimed at finding a solution to the conflict. The European Union remains ready to help the political dialogue, which could take place in the framework of a peace conference for the Democratic Republic of the Congo with support by the international community, bringing together all involved actors. Along these lines, the European Union stands ready to support any negotiation scheme finding the consent of all parties involved, inter alia, through the assistance of the Special Envoy of the European Union for the Great Lakes region. A regional conference could remain necessary as a second step at a later stage to consider issues of a regional dimension and to create mechanisms promoting security and cooperation.

The European Union once again reiterates its support for the principle of territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbouring countries and calls for a cessation of external interference in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Union further condemns acts of violence against civilians and any actions having a direct impact on the population, such as hate propaganda against specific ethnic groups or activities causing unnecessary suffering, as, for instance, the interruption of the provision of electricity, which has had severe humanitarian and sanitarian consequences.

The Central and Eastern European countries and Cyprus associated with the European Union and the European Free Trade Association countries, members of the European Economic Area align themselves with this statement.